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# POTATO PRODUCTION IN HOME GARDENS

by

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O. T. McWhorter, Extension Horticulturist

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### Potato Varieties for Home Gardens

Early potato varieties suggested for Oregon home gardeners are:

Bliss Triumph  
Irish Cobbler  
Early Rose

Earliest of All  
White Rose

Suggested varieties for late crops are:

Burbank  
Netted Gem  
Katahdin

### Seed Potato Treatment for Home Gardeners

Questions have been raised regarding seed potato treatment for home gardens where only a small amount of seed potatoes is to be used. The corrosive sublimate treatment, the standard treatment used by commercial potato growers, is rather cumbersome for the home gardener. A mercury compound sold as "Semesan bel" is suggested for home gardeners to use when seed potato treatment seems necessary. Use the Semesan bel as directed on the package in which it is purchased. The potatoes are dipped in Semesan bel solution and are removed as quickly as the potatoes are wet. The length of time for treatment is classed as "instant."

### Home Gardeners May Omit Seed Potato Treatment

Generally, the treatment of seed potatoes for home gardens is unnecessary. Potatoes grown from untreated seed may not be so free from scab and rhizoctonia as treated potatoes, but they will be edible. If the quality of the seed potatoes used for the home garden is poor, there is the probability that the treatment may not be of much value anyhow. Treatment in most cases aids the appearance of the resulting crop, but this is not important for home gardens. Usually it aids the crop very little, or not at all. If done wrong, it may reduce the crop.

The home gardener should plant certified seed potatoes, since such planting stock is known to be relatively free from disease. Most potato diseases reduce yields, but are invisible on the tubers. No examination of seed can tell much about the seed value. Hence, it is best to use certified seed, because such seed has been examined in the field where these diseases can be seen.

Cutting Seed Potatoes for Planting: Each seed piece should have at least one eye and should weigh one and one-half to two ounces. It is best to cut the pieces in blocky shapes, the less exposed cut surface, the better. For this reason medium sized potatoes often give better stands than do very large tubers.

It is good practice to dust cut seed potatoes with land plaster. Never expose seed potatoes to direct sunlight for any length of time. Never treat cut seed potatoes with corrosive sublimate.

Fertilizing Potatoes in Home Gardens: The home gardener will be limited to the use of the Victory Garden fertilizer, a 3-8-7 mixture. This carries 3 per cent nitrogen, 8 per cent phosphorus, and 7 per cent potash. If the Victory Garden fertilizer is spread over the entire surface of the soil, use  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 pounds to the square rod. Work it into the soil. Another method is to use about one ounce of fertilizer on either side of the seed piece at planting time, but place this fertilizer two or three inches to the side and about one inch deeper than the seed piece. Be exact about the amounts used in fertilizing hills and never put it under or against the seed piece.

Planting Distances and Seed Pieces Per Hill: Potato rows can be 30 to 42 inches apart in home gardens. Hills can be placed 18 to 24 inches apart in the row. One good seed piece per hill is sufficient.

Planting Depth: Potatoes in home gardens are usually planted three to five inches deep. Early potatoes are planted slightly more shallow than late potatoes.

Planting Dates: For home gardens it is usually practical to plant as soon as the ground warms up in the spring. Commercial growers, however, plant the late potato crop the last part of June after thoroughly preparing the soil. If irrigation is to be used, date of planting in western Oregon is unimportant.

Cultivation: Level cultivation is best. Cultivate to control weeds and following heavy rains, but cultivate no deeper than necessary to break the surface soil or to kill weeds.

Irrigation: If the crop is to be irrigated, start to water when the plants are about five inches high and never let the ground become dry from then on. Commercial growers usually irrigate once a week in the semi-arid parts of the state and once every ten days to two weeks in western Oregon.

Insect Pests: Potato flea beetles are the most serious pests of potatoes in Central and Western Oregon. They are shiny black beetles that eat round holes in the leaves. The larvae of the flea beetle feed on the tubers and produce tunnels on the surface. Dust with 40 per cent calcium arsenate or cryolite dust. Apply as soon as beetles appear. Repeat applications at 10-day intervals as long as beetles are present. For more detailed instructions see Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station Circular of Information 227 revised.

Diseases: Late potato blight: Use copper dusts on the potato foliage as recommended in Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station Circular of Information No. 290. These copper dusts may be added to calcium arsenate dusts when they are used for potato flea beetle in late August and early September.